

Representative Jeff Morris • 40th District

Getting around the region

Our regional transportation is a combination of roads, ferries, trains and other mass transit that reduces traffic jams. The Legislature funded several projects to strengthen long-term ferry service planning and improve safety for commuters and pedestrians.

Ferries:

Lowering fare hikes in the short-term.

Funds are provided to allow for lower fare hikes than originally anticipated - 6% hikes in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009. Instead, the Legislature provides sufficient funds to have only one 6% hike in 2006, and then 2.5% hikes thereafter. The Legislature also appropriated \$17.4 million to cover unanticipated ferry fuel costs – which the Tariff Policy Committee considered paying partly through fare hikes.

Keeping fares affordable long-term.

The state will examine the ferry finance system in order to improve their future fiscal stability. The resulting recommendations will be presented to the 2007 Legislature and will be used to put the ferry system on firmer fiscal grounds.

Building more efficient vessels.

We're building four 144-car vessels, rather than four 130-car vessels. These larger vessels allow for more auto space while using the same amount of fuel and staffing. The more efficiencies the ferry system makes, the less pressures there are on fare increases.



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Report to the 40th District

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Representative Jeff Morris Report to the 40th District



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2006 Legislative Update

- Energy Freedom
- Improved ferry service
- Community projects

Dear Neighbor,

The 2006 legislative session was one of the most productive for Northwest Washington in recent memory. And we got it all done with a day to spare!

We made significant gains in renewable energy investments, funded several different plans to support the ferry system, and improved safety on our roads. We also passed a variety of bills to provide common sense solutions to problems unique to our community.

Many of these ideas were brought to me by constituents who ran into bureaucratic red tape and needed solutions. Helping you solve problems is what I enjoy most about serving as your citizen legislator. I am proud of the solutions we have found together.

As Chair of the House Committee on Technology, Energy and Communications it was our committee's most productive session, passing 23 bills on to the Governor.

It is my sincere honor and pleasure to represent you in Olympia. Now that I have left Olympia and returned to my "civilian" life, I ask you take some time to read about your state government and let me know what you think. On the outside panel is my contact information. Please get in touch with me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jeff Morris



Energy Freedom

Here in Washington, we have always prided ourselves on our commitment to clean energy. During the session, lawmakers took bold new steps to establish an economy based on the production of clean burning, renewable energy. I was proud to join my colleagues in Olympia in passing a package of legislation that bolsters current green energy industries, jumpstarts emerging technologies, and supports the development of homegrown fuel products.

The Energy Freedom Fund will provide \$25 million in low interest loans and grants to build the necessary infrastructure to refine and produce biodiesel and ethanol. These investments are necessary to establish a firm foundation so our state can lead as demand for alternative energy sources grows.

The Legislature also passed into law a proposal I offered on the House Floor to set minimum standards for the state's diesel and gasoline supplies. These new benchmarks will require that at least 2 percent of the diesel sold in the state be biodiesel. The same goes for gasoline– at least 2 percent of the gasoline fuel sold

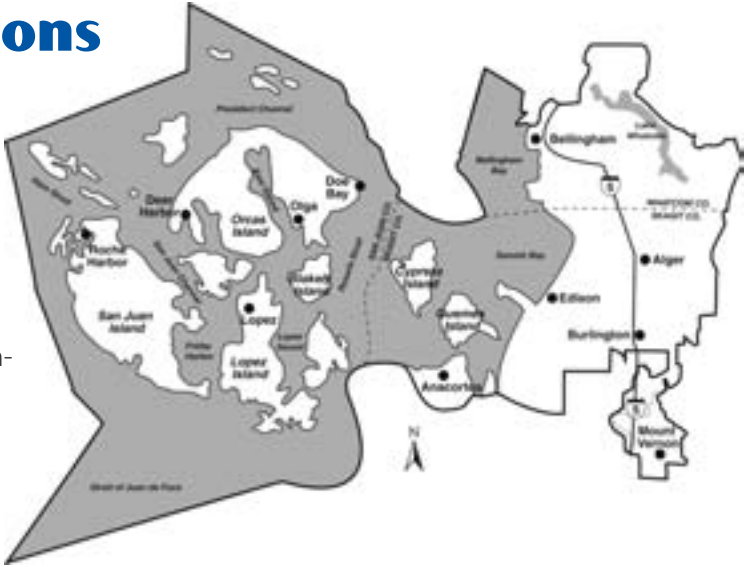
will be ethanol based. These minimum standards will provide markets for these emerging technologies and help clean our air. It is also a shot in the arm for regional economic development as it will provide new markets for Skagit and Whatcom county farmers.

- **Biodiesel** is fuel derived from vegetable oils and can be used in the vast majority of modern diesel engines. Canola, soy, and mustard seed are all crops that can be used to produce biodiesel. Biodiesel can be mixed with regular diesel or used in its pure form. It burns cleaner than regular diesel and because it is non-toxic and biodegradable – it is much safer to transport.
- **Ethanol fuel** is derived from corn, wheat, sawdust, paper mill wastes, yard and a wide variety of other cellulose plants. Ethanol is usually mixed with gasoline but can be used in its pure form in modified engines. Ethanol is a clean burning alternative to gasoline.



Common-sense solutions for our unique community

The Legislature hears thousands of bills each year and winds up passing hundreds of new laws. Sometimes, during the hectic pace, there are unintended consequences that have real effects on communities like ours. I worked with my seatmate to find common-sense solutions to a variety of these problems.



- **San Juan County Air Ambulance Service** – Air ambulance services on a subscription basis were discontinued in 2002 due to financial difficulties and regulatory compliance issues. We worked to resume the services, which will be reinstated soon for Island communities.
- **Flexibility for area non-profits** – In small, isolated communities like San Juan County, non-profit organizations have the only available meeting space. The San Juan Island Senior Center almost lost its status as a non-profit for renting out meeting space to other organizations. They approached Dave Quall, Harriet Spanel and me for help at a community meeting. With my seatmates' help, I sponsored and passed a bill to give the community more access to meeting space without having dire tax consequences.
- **Aluminum smelter tax credits** - During the 2001 energy crisis, the spiking costs of electricity caused most of the state's aluminum smelters to shut down. Many of these plants never reopened or have not resumed normal operations. Tax incentives put in place under the 2004 Aluminum Smelter Tax Program are extended to 2012 in another law I passed. These high-paying jobs in Whatcom County are critical to a diverse economy.
- **Western Washington University Border Research Institute** - The northern I-5 corridor presents several challenges associated with transportation, trade and border security. The Border Research Institute is a multi-disciplinary research institute that studies these issues and makes recommendations on how to better address problems. I was successful in securing an additional \$250,000 for the institute so it can continue with this important work.

Rodd Pemble tells Rep. Morris about his growing compost company.

- **Anacortes, Burlington and Sedro Woolley Long-Distance Phone Fees** –Skagit County communities were charged long-distance tolls when calling from Anacortes to Burlington or Sedro Woolley and vice versa. The Burlington Chamber of Commerce met with me and mentioned they would like to see the tolls removed. It took some time but we worked with our state's Utilities, Transportation and Communications Commission (UTC) to find a solution. When Verizon merged with MCI the opportunity was created to remove these tolls. The

UTC ordered the change as a condition of approving the merger. As of March 1, 2006 Skagit County consumers will save millions of dollars each year!

